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Message Text

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51
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 H-03 SS-20 NSC-07

DRC-01 /081 W
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R 280710Z MAY 74
FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY
TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 5442
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 1075

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, AS
SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

1. AFTER NINE DAYS OF HAIR'S BREADTH TENSION, THE LABOR PARTY HEADQUARTERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES IS QUITE CONFIDENT THAT THE FEDERAL ALP GOVERNMENT WILL END UP WITH AT LEAST A MAJORITY OF FIVE SEATS IN THE HOUSE AND PERHAPS SEVEN. IN THE SENATE, THEY EXPECT AT LEAST 29 LABOR SEATS AND POSSIBLY 31, DEPENDING ON CAPTURING A FIFTH SEAT IN QUEENSLAND AND A SIXTH IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

2. MOREOVER, THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE N.S.W. BRANCH OF THE PARTY, GEOFF CAHILL, IS PROUD OF THE PARTY'S ESPECIALLY GOOD PERFORMANCE IN N.S.W. AS COMPARED WITH OTHER STATES. HE ESTIMATES THAT OVERALL THE LABOR PARTY WON NEARLY 53 PERCENT OF THE VOTES CAST FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, NEARLY 52 PERCENT OF THOSE CAST FOR THE SENATE AND 51.4 PER-CENT ON THE FOUR REFERENDA. HE POINTS OUT THAT ONLY IN NEW SOUTH WALES DID ALL FOUR REFERENDA PASS, ALTHOUGH THEY FAILED FEDERALLY.

3. THE KEY POINT REMAINING IS THE SIXTH SENATE SEAT. AT THIS MOMENT THE LABOR PARTY HAS EARNED ABOUT 5.6 SEATS AND
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THE L/CP COALITION 4.4. THE FINAL DECISION WILL CERTAINLY

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NOT BE MADE FOR AT LEAST TWO WEEKS AND WILL BE BASED ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF PREFERENCES. AT THE MOMENT CAHILL BELIEVES THE ODDS FAVOR A VICTORY BY LABOR'S SIXTH CANDIDATE, PETER WESTERWAY.

4. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION AS TO WHY LABOR'S PERFORMANCE IN QUEENSLAND DROPPED, HE SAID THAT IT IS BASICALLY BECAUSE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND IN PARTICULAR PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM'S STATEMENTS HAD FRIGHTENED THE COUNTRY POPULATION OF QUEENSLAND. FOR ALL OF HIS WEAKNESSES, THE PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND, BJELKE-PETERSON, DOES CONVEY A CONVICTION OF CONCERN AND SUPPORT FOR THE INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY PEOPLE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THIS IS A WEAKNESS IN LABOR'S POSTURE AND THAT MOREOVER IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING IF PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM COULD INTRODUCE HIS NEW GOVERNMENT AND POLICY AS BEING A GOVERNMENT AND POLICY "FOR ALL THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA", BUT HE EXPRESSED SOME DOUBT THAT IT WOULD BE EASY TO "TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS". IN ANY CASE, CAHILL SAID, "WE HAVE PROVED THAT WE CAN GOVERN WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE COUNTRY PEOPLE."
HANNAH

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